EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The history and growth of Lansing is inextricably tied to the automobile. This gas-powered vehicle introduced profound changes in the American way of life, and offered enormous opportunity to those who were first to grasp its vast economic potential. At the dawn of the twentieth century – and in the waning years of the horse-drawn era – Lansing eagerly joined the race and assumed an early lead in the invention and production of automobiles. Over one hundred years later, the evidence of that industry's eminence is still felt in the community. The goal of this survey project was to identify some of the places that were witness to Lansing's achievements in the field of auto production, especially the lesser-known industries and suppliers that supported it.

With the passage of time, it becomes easy to overlook the landmarks of the industrial past, particularly in the gritty world of factories, forges and foundries. Recognizing the value and untapped potential of its rich industrial past, the City of Lansing contracted with the Mannik & Smith Group, Inc. (MSG) to conduct a thematic survey and context narrative for Lansing's automotive industry during the period from 1890 to 1930. With the support of the State of Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, and the MotorCities-Automobile National Heritage Area (ANHA), the purpose of the project was to identify the resources in Lansing that tell the story of the auto industry, and to generate data that may assist future planning, marketing and preservation efforts on their behalf.

With the help of Lansing's Stewardship Community Board of ANHA and the guidance of the Lansing Historic District Commission (LHD), initial research efforts yielded more information than was ever expected. A list of over 450 sites related to the automotive theme was compiled. The project team was able to locate approximately 107 of those sites still standing, and fifty-two that retained many of their historic physical attributes. With the concurrence of the Lansing Planning Office and the State Historic Preservation Office staff, those fifty-two sites were photographed and recorded in a standard professional format. The information was also entered into an on-line resource database created and maintained by ANHA on their website for general public use. Concurrent with those efforts, the consultant also prepared a context report to establish a broader perspective on Lansing's auto industry.

With the context report as a framework, and using the results of the field studies, the project team evaluated the historic significance of the sites for the purpose of determining their potential eligibility for listing in national, state or local registers. Of the fifty-two sites surveyed (comprising sixty individual buildings), twenty-six sites are recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. They are:

- Charles Blades house at 230 S. Butler
- Ray Potter house at 1348 Cambridge
- Harry Harper house at 1408 Cambridge
- Dean & Harris at 1127 N. Cedar
- Standard Oil Company bulk facility at 410 S. Cedar
- Raymond Chevrolet Sales at 1213 Center
- Pulver Brothers Filling Station at 127 W. Grand River
- Elmer Dail house at 1204 N. Genesee
- Ernest Dail house at 1306 N. Genesee
- Capitol Heights Filling Station at 1223 E. Grand River
- James Seager house at 533 S. Grand
- Lansing Motor & Pump Company at 326 S. Hosmer
- Michigan Screw Company at 506 S. Hosmer
- Hugo Lundberg house at 1701 Jerome

- Harris Thomas house at 1712 Jerome
- Roxanna Gas Station at 401 N. Larch
- Gier Pressed Steel at 1508 N. Larch
- Abel Motor Sales at 726 E. Michigan
- Atlas Drop Forge at 209 W. Mt. Hope
- Novo Engine Company at 705 E. Oakland/700 Porter
- Jarvis Engine & Machine Works at 905 River
- Prudden Wheel at 725 E. Saginaw
- Burton S. Gier house at 301 N. Sycamore
- Melling Forging Company at 1709 Thompson
- Standard Oil Company filling station at 1501 S. Washington
- Duplex Truck Company at 2100 S. Washington

It is the hope of the authors that this study will educate and inform the citizens of Lansing about the number and variety of local buildings that were integral to the invention and evolution of the automobile. Especially as we move into the "post-industrial" age, the physical remainders of this period, represented primarily and most explicitly by the buildings discussed in this report, become more important with each passing year. We hope that this study will motivate Lansing residents to a greater appreciation of the historic automobile architecture that surrounds them.